

## Late Mughal Period Tombs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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### Abstract:

*After the death of Aurangzeb Alamgir, the Mughal Empire showed a clear sign of disintegration and the feeble descendents of the Great Mughal did not retain the same position. Due to unfavourable environment building activities also slowed down so that only a few buildings of this period may be seen in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. One of them is the tomb of Sayyid Abd al-Wahab alias Akhund Panju Baba at Akbarpura near Peshawar and the second is the burial place of Doda Baba in Bajaur Agency in the main graveyard of Doda village in the Nawagai area. Both the tombs are the sole example of the late Mughal period in this locality and no detail study are carried out before. In the present study comprehensive documentations of both the monuments are done with analytical study.*

### Late Mughal Period ( AD 1707–1857)

The decline of the Mughal Empire took place with the death of Aurangzeb 'Alamgīr in AD 1707. The empire showed a clear sign of disintegration, although the feeble successors of the great Mughals continued to rule over the dismembered dominions till AD 1857. This period is marked by mutual dissensions, gradual entrenchment of foreign powers and raids by the Persian and Afghān adventurers such as Nādir Shāh Afshār and Aḥmad Shāh Abdālī in 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Later Mughal kings had neither the resources, nor inclination, to erect any major monuments. The only example of this period is the tomb of Ṣāfdar Jang (Koch 1991: 132), who was the Viceroy of Oudh under Muḥammad Shāh (AD 1719 – 48) and later on Prime Minister under Ahmad Shāh (AD 1748–54) (Sharma 1964: 324).

Due to unfavourable environment building activities also slowed down so that only a few buildings including two tombs of this period may be seen in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. One of them is the tomb of the Akhund Panjū Bābā at

Akbarpura near Peshāwar and the second is the burial place of Doda Bābā in Bajaur Agency (Fig. 1).

### 1. Akhund Panju Baba

Sayyid Abd al-Wahāb alias Akhund Panjū Bābā was born in Tarakai village of the District Swābi in AH 945/ AD1538 (Qadari 1964: 17). His father Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn was known as Ghāzi Bābā (Afghani 1967: 475). When the family lived in Shāhdand at Peshāwar his father and mother died and were buried there. At the age of forty-five (Qadari 1964: 17; Quddusi 1966: 209), he left Shāhdand and permanently settled in Akbarpura (Das 1874: 202-03). It is said that he used to preach sitting under a date Palm. Shortly afterwards this place was converted into a mosque called “Khajūr wālī Masjid” (Date Mosque) (Nasr 1951: 5). He died in AH 1040 /AD 1630. He lived to the ripe age of 99 and was buried at Misripur in Akbarpura (Shah 1999: 73). In AH 1221/ AD 1806 a certain Muṣṭafā hailing from Peshāwar constructed a tomb over the grave and installed a stele of white marble engraved with

couplets in Persian recording the year of the death of the saint and that of the tomb construction (Quddusi 1966: 223). This tomb, like other religious buildings of the Muslims, fell victim to the general depredation at the hands of the Sikhs and was restored in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Shah 1999: 73).

### ***Tomb Building***

It is square in plan measuring 9.80 x 9.80 m (Fig. 2) and consists of a square chamber, octagonal drum and heavy ribbed dome (Pl. 1a, Fig. 1a). Externally the south, east and west sides are identical in execution, each having an arched opening with wooden frame and two leaves. While the north side, is marked as façade (Fig. 1a) of the tomb building. It is relieved by five vertical panels, the central being larger. A rectangular panel has a cusped arch marking the main entrance. This lower panel is topped by a projected cornice decorated with three pairs of rectangular panels. The lower two rows have sunk arches while the upper pair is adorned with *gul-e nau* design in relief. The panels flanking the central one show in each case, two superimposed rectangular panels containing sunk arches. It is provide with an alcove with another pair of recessed panels topped by a pair of *gul-e nau* design in relief.

The spandrels of the main entrance arch are decorated with full lotus flowers in stucco relief. The wooden door is carved with floral designs. The parapet is marked by a projected moulding in high relief showing acanthus leaves. All the other three sides of the square chamber are similarly treated and designed. Each side shows five rows of sunk panels in which the lower most row has a large central panel in the middle with wooden door flanked on either side by a pair of tall rectangular

panels containing a recessed arch in each case. Adjacent to each pair is a long and narrow panel. The second row shows horizontally executed sunk panels. The extreme end of this row shows a small sunk panel in either case. The third row is also relieved with rectangular panel showing sunk arches on the sides, while the central panel is decorated with a peculiar design. All these four rows are enclosed by a spacious recessed panel covering the entire surface of the wall which above is divided into five rectangular panels showing curved cornice in the middle supported by ornamental pilaster. A projected moulding marks the parapet. Each corner shows three sided engaged pilaster topped by inverted leaves. Each corner of the square chamber is marked by a small minaret with domed pavilion.

The square chamber is topped by a circular drum in two tiers separated by a projected moulding. The drum receives a heavy hemispherical ribbed dome, which is decorated by a series of acanthus leaves in high relief. The summit of the dome shows an inverted lotus crowned by a finial.

Internally, the square chamber 6.75 x 6.75 m, shows a central large rectangular panel with pointed arch marking the entrance of the tomb. On either side of this arch is a smaller panel relieved with sunk arches. The main arch spandrels are decorated with two leaves and a lotus flower. The smaller are flanked by upright rectangular sunk panels ornamented with circles showing flower in low relief. Stucco tracery bands in low relief separate these panels. This zone is also topped by horizontally laid rectangular and square sunk panels (Fig. 1b).

This square chamber is converted into an octagonal phase of transition by means of

corner squinches and intermediate arches. Each squinch arch shows three full and two half small arches within rectangular panels. These decorative sunk arches are surmounted by ornamental ribbed half domes with the finial adorned in relief. The entire squinch arch is decorated with multifoil floral and geometrical designs and each intermediate arch contains another recessed arch, both being decorated with painted floral and geometrical designs. The intermediate arch on the south side in front of the main entrance contains an Arabic inscription in *Tughra*. It is executed in blue colour paint. The spandrels of squinches and intermediate arches are decorated with floral scrolls and flower plants. At some places is a leaf motif showing the word Allah in *Naskh* in blue colour. Some motifs show the surah *al Ikhlas*. The phase of transition is demarcated above by a projected moulding with rope pattern in paint.

The springing point of the dome is marked by a series of acanthus leaf decoration in high relief. While the soffit of the dome is decorated above the springing point with a series of ornamental arches having flower plants in brown, blue and green colours. The rest of the dome is decorated with painted geometrical designs, star patterns, fruits such as melon, mango, grapes, apple and pineapple. The painted decorations are only restricted to the phase of transition and soffit of the dome, while the square chamber shows merely stucco relief. In the middle of the chamber is the grave of Akhūnd Panjū Bābā with two other graves. The floor is recently flagged with white marble large size tiles with a line of black marble.

This building was first built in 1806 AD and then rebuilt some time in between 1915 and

1920. The material used in the construction is small size bricks, stucco mortar, mural plaster, timber and iron.

## 2. Doda Baba

The early life of the saint and his real name is nowhere recorded, but as narrated by the local people, he was an elderly saint when he settled here in the Mughal period for preaching and teaching of Islam. After his death, he was buried in the main graveyard of Doda village in Nawagai area, Bajaur Agency and his followers erected the tomb upon his grave.

### *Tomb Building*

It is (Pl. Ib) square in plan, 5.50 x 5.50 m, externally. All the four sides are plainly plastered and white washed. Each corner of the square chamber shows corner turrets, above the parapet, which are topped by 1.83 m high tapering cylindrical minarets. The square chamber (Pl. Ib), at a height of 5.50 m, is topped by a projected parapet of stone slabs, under a 2.75 m bell shape dome and a metre high pointed pinnacle.

The entrance to the grave chamber (Pl. Ib) is provided in the centre of the south sidewall under a cusped arch with a rectangular wooden frame and door. A metre above the entrance arch, in the centre is a six sided star shaped sunk design. The western side, in the middle, has a low arched rectangular blind window of wooden grill for air and light.

Internally, the grave chamber is square in plan 4.57 x 4.57 m. The centre of the chamber accommodates the grave of Doda Bābā. The floor of the chamber and the grave itself has been recently paved. The dado level is marked by a running band of plaster in relief with applied blue paint. Above the dado level, walls have tall sunk pointed arches, while the

south side in the centre has the entrance. The square chamber (Pl. IIa) is converted into octagon to receive the round base of the dome by corner pendentives topped by a 0.50 m wide running band.

The decoration (Pl. IIb) is confined only to the interior of the tomb chamber. The phase of transition, top of the pointed sunk arches of the square chamber and soffit of the dome are decorated with floral and stylized leaf designs in blue and yellow colours. The wooden frame is decorated with a running series of saw tooth design in relief. The western sidewall on the inner face shows an inscribed date. The tomb was built in AH 1213/ AD 1798. The inscription is in a very poor state of conservation and cannot be photographed (Shakirullah 2012: 53). The materials used in the construction are locally available rough stones fixed in lime mortar, plastered internally and externally with a 0.91 m thick layer of lime mortar.

### ***State of Preservation***

The Akhund Panju Baba tomb is well preserved and properly looked after by his descendants and followers. While the tomb building of Doda Baba is not in a very good state of preservation and needs proper attention. Some cracks have been developed in the dome and, as a temporary arrangement; the dome has been covered with metal sheets. The rest of the building is white washed which from time to time; the floor and grave of the saint were paved recently. The painted decoration is original and not retouched.

### **Discussion**

Muslim architecture is an expression, in beautiful building forms, of the desire of the Muslim to achieve their spiritual and mundane goals through fascinating structures. The

buildings are erected in a social context and they serve the purposes and ambitions of a human society. Hence they are not dead but are living monuments of human endeavour to create beautiful shapes. They are made in accordance with the resources and technological abilities available at the time. Therefore, material resources and engineering skills are the basic factors, which transform social and spiritual needs into aesthetically pleasing creations. Through the study of architecture we can understand the role of man and his society behind all these noble creations.

This study of the later Mughal period tomb architecture in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is undertaken in light of the Late Mughal period history. This is a very clear indication and we can draw a line that after the death of Aurangzeb Alamgir in AD 1707, the decline of the Mughal Empire accelerated and pushed the empires into a worst kind of disorder and anarchy in which disaffected Mughal governors. Due to this political uncertainty, building activity was also slowed down, so that we can see only a few buildings of this period and there is no continuity of such architectural elements, because they nor got any supervision of the ruler or nor any proper architectural/ engineering skill. Both the under discussion building shows that these were built by the builders with their own skill and resources.

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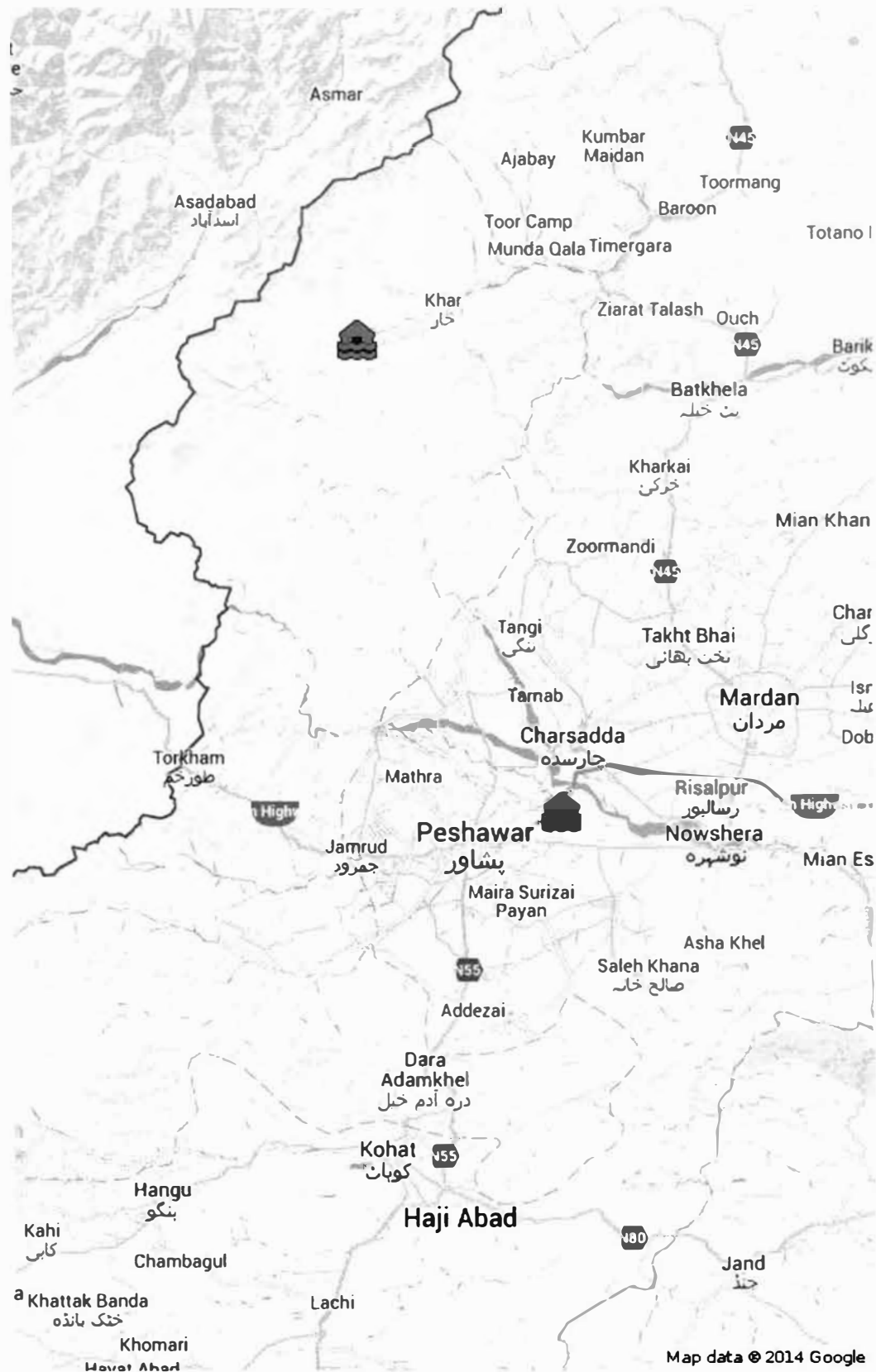


Fig. 1. Google Map showing the location of both the tombs (Akhund Panju Baba & Doda Baba)



Pl. Ia. Peshāwar: Akhūnd Panjū Bābā Tomb, general view



Pl. Ib. Bajaur Agency: Doda Bābā's Tomb, a view of the Façade



Pl. IIa. Bajaur Agency: Doda Bābā Tomb: showing details of painted decoration and arrangement of the phase of transition



Pl. IIb. Bajaur Agency: Doda Bābā Tomb: soffit of the dome showing floral painted decoration



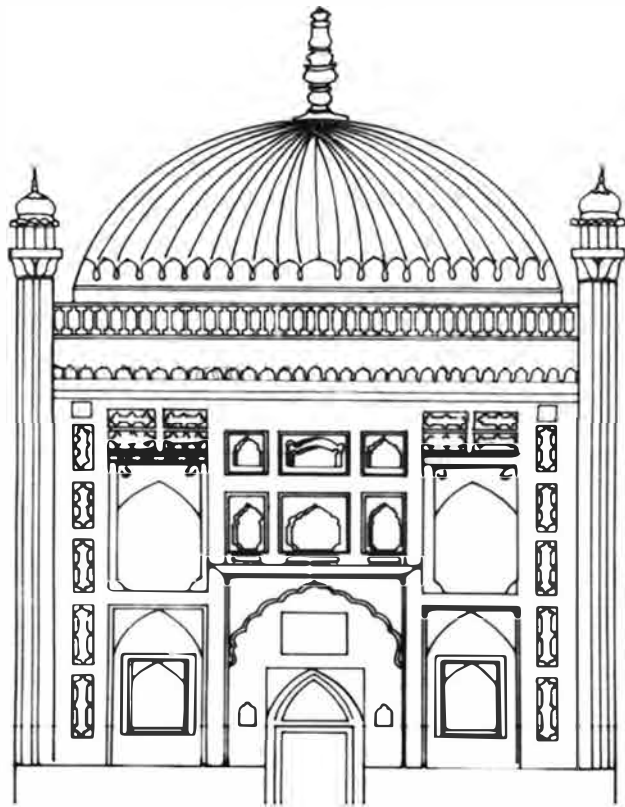


Fig. 1a. Peshāwar (Akbarpura): Akhund Panjū Bābā Tomb, front elevation

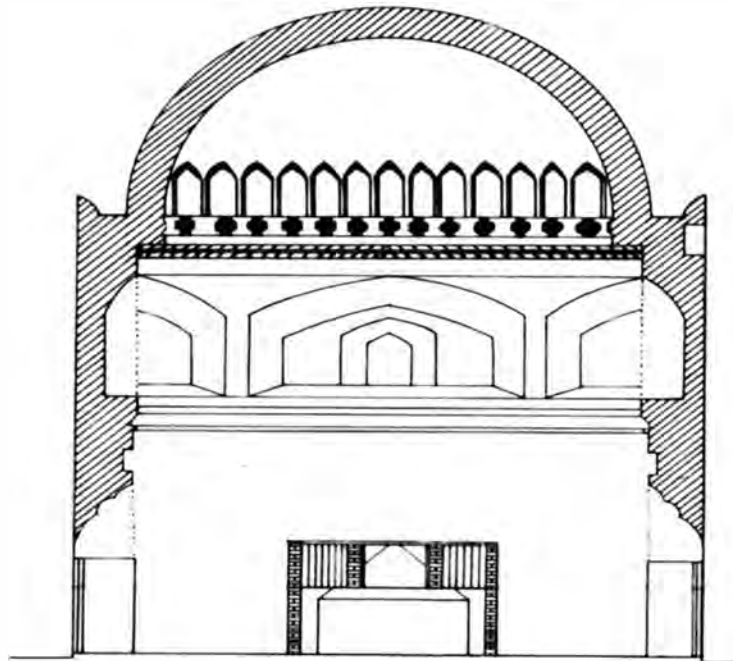


Fig. 1b. Peshāwar (Akbarpura): Akhund Panjū Bābā Tomb, sectional elevation

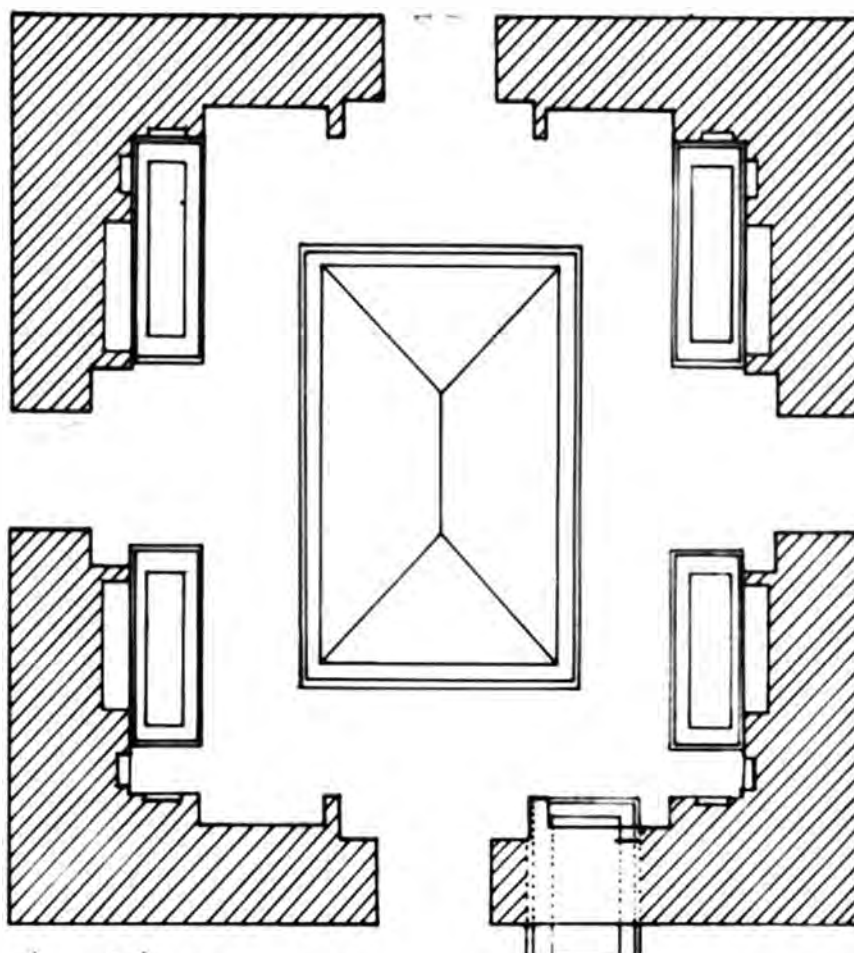


Fig. 2. Peshawar: Akhūnd Panjū Bābā Tomb: ground plan